

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8148

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL IBADAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NI

SUBJECT: LABOR UNITY INAUGURAL DATE POSTPONED

REF: LAGOS 1721 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: NLC INAUGURAL CONGRESS POSTPONED UNTIL APRIL 12
TO ALLOW UNITED LABOUR CONGRESS OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLY WITH
TRADE UNION DECREE. DELAYING TACTICS OF TWO TOP ULC LEADERS
RISK SPLITTING ULC ITSELF BUT STILL APPEAR UNLIKELY TO BLOCK
MERGER. END SUMMARY

1. NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (NLC) STEERING COMMITTEE MET
FEBRUARY 25 TO CONSIDER PROGRESS TOWARDS UNIFYING LABOR
MOVEMENT, WITH MAJOR DECISION TO POSTPONE DATE FOR INAUGURAL
CONVENTION TO APRIL 12. ACCORDING TO UNITED LABOUR CONGRESS (ULC)
OFFICIALS, NEW DATE WAS SET AT THEIR REQUEST TO ENABLE
ULC TO FULFILL LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MERGER WITH NLC. ULC
CENTRAL COMMITTEE NOW PLANS MEET MARCH 12 TO SET DATE FOR SPECIAL
CONVENTION TO RATIFY NLC CONSTITUTION, WHILE NIGERIAN WORKERS
COUNCIL (NWC) SCHEDULED HOLD ITS SPECIAL CONVENTION MARCH 21
TO VOTE ON AMALGAMATION INTO NLC.

2. DISCUSSIONS WITH ULC OFFICIALS INDICATE TEMPERS ARE RISING
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OVER WHAT THEY SEE AS DELAY TACTICS BEING USED BY ACTING GENERAL

SECRETARY ODEYEMI AND ULC PRESIDENT KALTUNGO TO SABOTAGE UNITY MOVEMENT. NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUAL UNIONS, PLJ ULS STATE BRANCHES IN MID-WEST AND EAST-CENTRAL STATES, HAVE MADE IT KNOWN THEY PLAN TO WITHDRAW FROM ULC AND JOIN NLC UNLESS ULC LEADERS ACT QUICKLY. ONE ULC OFFICIAL STATES THIS WOULD LEAVE ODEYEMI AND KALTUNGO COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM UNION MOVEMENT, AS BOTH ARE POLITICIANS AND NEITHER HAS REAL TRADE UNION FOUNDATION.

3. CURRENT RUMOR IS THAT ONE OF INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNION (ICFTU) AFRICA BUREAU REPRESENTATIVES HELD MEETINGS LAST WEEKEND IN LAGOS WITH KALTUNGO, OSTENSIBLY IN HIS CAPACITY AS MEMBER OF ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD. COMMONLY HELD BELIEF IS ICFTU REPRESENTATIVE WAS PASSING ICFTU FUNDS AND GUIDANCE TO KALTUNGO IN ORDER TO ABORT NLC MERGER. ARGUMENT IS THAT ICFTU DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE NIGERIAN AFFILIATE AND UNDER NLC CONSTITUTION THIS IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN UNLESS ICFTU WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT AFFILIATE WHICH WOULD ALSO BE TIED TO WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS AND WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR. NLC CONSTITUTION PERMITS ALL FORMER CENTRAL LABOR BODIES TO MAINTAIN THEIR INTERNATIONAL TIES, BUT IS PURPOSELY VAGUE AS TO HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

4. EMBASSY LABOR ASSISTANT REPORTS LEADERS OF LEFT-WING NTUC ASKED HIM TO "APOLOGIZE" TO EMBASSY, AALC AND AFL-CIO FOR THEIR HAVING FALSELY BELIEVED AMERICANS WERE "INTERFERING" IN MERGER. NTUC LEADERS NOW CLAIM THEY SEE ICFTU AS TRUE VILLIAN.

5. COMMENT: POSTPONEMENT OF NLC INAUGURAL INDICATES UNION LEADERS STILL WILLING MAKE EVERY EFFORT GET ULC INTO MERGER AS SINGLE ENTITY. RUMORED APPEARANCE OF ICFTU REPRESENTATIVE HAS NOT HELPED MATTERS, HOWEVER, AND RESULTING DISCONTENT HAS FURTHER JEOPARDIZED KALTUNGO'S CHANCES OF GAINING TOP NLC POSITION. IF HE AND ODEYEMI PERSIST IN THEIR DELAYING TACTICS, THEY MAY WELL SPLIT ULC AND LEAVE THEMSELVES ISOLATED FROM BULK OF LABOR MOVEMENT BUT DO NOT APPEAR ABLE TO KEEP MERGER FROM TAKING PLACE.
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